

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCEM-02 CEA-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

EB-11 FRB-02 H-03 INR-10 INT-08 L-03 LAB-06 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 AID-20 CIEP-02 SS-20 STR-08

TAR-02 TRSE-00 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 OMB-01 DRC-01

/161 W

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R 111750Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7014

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES DEBATE ON INDUSTRIAL CRISIS

REF: LONDON 0436

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT WAS VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE AS PARLIAMENT CONCLUDED ITS TWO-DAY DEBATE ON THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS. LABOR, ENCOURAGED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S CLUMSY HANDLING OF THE TUC OFFER THAT ITS AFFILIATES WOULD NOT USE A SETTLEMENT WITH THE MINERS

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AS A BASIS FOR THEIR OWN WAGE CLAIMS, WAS IN A

REMARKABLY AGGRESSIVE AND SELF-CONFIDENT MOOD.
WHITELAW KEPT ALIVE SOME VERY FAINT HOPE OF A COMPROMISE
SOLUTION. END SUMMARY

2. PARLIAMENT CONCLUDED ITS TWO-DAY EMERGENCY DEBATE
ON THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS YESTERDAY IN A HIGHLY CHARGED
AND PARTISAN ATMOSPHERE. THE MAIN SPEAKERS FOR THE
GOVERNMENT WERE WILLIE WHITELAW, SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EMPLOYMENT, AND PETER WALKER, SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY. THEIR RESPECTIVE "SHADOWS,"
REG PRENTICE AND TONY BENN, REPLIED FOR LABOR.

3. WHITELAW DEFENDED STAGE THREE AS FAIR AND FLEXIBLE.
HE CONCEDED THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MINERS MIGHT BE
A "SPECIAL CASE," BUT SAID THAT WHAT CONSTITUTED A
SPECIAL CASE SHOULD NOT BE DETERMINED BY SHEER TRIALS
OF STRENGTH. HE HOPED AND EXPECTED THAT THE PAY
BOARD'S REPORT ON PAY RELATIVITIES, DUE OUT IN LATE
JANUARY, WOULD INDICATE A SIGNIFICANT WAY TOWARDS
FINDING A MORE ACCEPTABLE WAY OF SETTling WAGE DISPUTES.

4. WALKER, IN A RATHER STUMBLING PERFORMANCE, CONTENDED
THAT THIS CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT HAD DONE MORE FOR
THE MINERS -- IN WAGE INCREASES AND INVESTMENT IN THE
INDUSTRY -- THAN THE LAST LABOR GOVERNMENT.

5. PRENTICE THOUGHTFULLY MARSHALLED THE ARGUMENTS FOR
TREATING THE MINERS AS A SPECIAL CASE. HE SAID VARIOUS
SOLUTIONS TO THE CURRENT DISPUTE HAD PRESENTED THEM-
SELVES BUT THE GOVERNMENT LACKED THE WILL TO REACH A
SETTLEMENT.

6. BENN, DELIVERING THE MOST IMPRESSIVE SPEECH OF THE
ENTIRE DEBATE, MADE A FUNDAMENTAL INDICTMENT OF THE
ENTIRE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN BRITAIN.

7. COMMENT: THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE HAS SERVED THE
USEFUL PURPOSE OF FORCING BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND
THE OPPOSITION TO DEFINE AND DEFEND MORE PRECISELY
THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ON THE MINERS' DISPUTE.
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WHITELAW'S CONCESSION THAT THE MINERS MIGHT AFTER ALL
BE CONSIDERED AS A "SPECIAL CASE" (HOWEVER THAT MAY
BE DEFINED), AND HIS HIGH HOPES FOR THE POSSIBILITIES
INHERENT IN THE PAY BOARD'S REPORT ON PAY RELATIVITIES
KEEP ALIVE AT LEAST THE FAINT HOPES OF A COMPROMISE
SOLUTION.

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